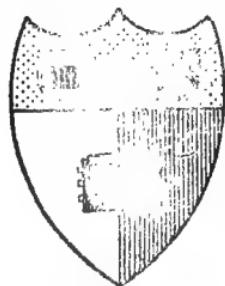


ML
410
W2
W42

WEINGÄRTNER - Bayreuth (1876-1896)

CORNELL UNIVERSITY
LIBRARIES
ITHACA, N. Y. 14853



Music Library
Lincoln Hall

BAYREUTH

(1876-1896)

BY

FELIX WEINGARTNER.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

BY

LILY ANTROBUS.

PRICE ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE.

WEEKES & CO

14, HANOVER STREET, REGENT STREET, LONDON, W.



Cornell University Library

The original of this book is in
the Cornell University Library.

There are no known copyright restrictions in
the United States on the use of the text.

BAYREUTH

(1876-1896).,

BY

FELIX WEINGARTNER.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

BY

LILY ANTROBUS.

PRICE ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE.

WEEKES & CO.,

14, HANOVER STREET, REGENT STREET, LONDON, W.

BAYREUTH

(1876-1896).

TWENTY years had passed before it was found possible to repeat Richard Wagner's "Ring des Nibelungen" in the theatre which had been specially designed for that purpose. The "Teutonic Spirit" upon which Wagner had relied when projecting and carrying out his gigantic work had played him false. It might have been thought that national enthusiasm, fertilized by the hope of a unique production of a commanding genius, would have born fruit, but the necessary financial support which had been expected was not forthcoming, and Wagner, persecuted by malice and scepticism, would have had to renounce the hope of seeing any representations that came up to his ideal, had not King Louis, of immortal memory, nobly come forward to his help. It would be carrying coals to Newcastle to speak here of the importance of the "Nibelungen" representations that at last took place in 1876. Wagner was however forced to abandon the repetition of the performances planned for the following year, because of the want of general interest and sympathy. For six years he kept his intentions to himself and did not reveal them to the world, till the time came to produce a new work, the purest and loftiest he ever wrote, and once more both performers and spectators were united at Bayreuth. The voice of calumny was silenced before the sublime beauty of "Parsifal," and the universal and unreserved enthusiasm with which it was received, as compared with the reception given to his former works, inspired the hope that the festivals rested on a firm basis, and that Wagner could now carry out his plans without further let or hindrance. It is possible that, even if he had lived, he would never have composed a new

work, but have dedicated the rest of his life simply to a series of artistically perfect representations of his former works. Ten years, perhaps even less, would have sufficed for this, and what a gain for art, what priceless stores of knowledge would have been ours!

However, it is unworthy to lament over what is irreparably lost and to worry over what might have been. In this world we ought only to take into account that which really has come to pass and make the best of it.

After the Master's eyes had closed in death "Parsifal" was given two years in succession (1883 and 1884). The same artists as in 1882 took part in the performance, there were no alterations in the stage mounting, Levi conducted, and there was nothing to remind us that the creator and quickener of all the beauty which enthralled us was no longer living. Only the absence of the pleased and hearty "Bravo!" that sounded from the depths of the dark box, when the Flower Maidens had sung

* "Kannst du uns nicht lieben und minnen,
Wir welken und sterben dahinnen"

especially well, woke in us a sudden and painful sense of that personality, a sense of loss which could only be appeased by the beauty of the representation and the thought; "His work lives, and will live for ever."

General interest had now been awakened about Bayreuth. The festivals were well attended, if not in such great numbers as at present, and it seemed as if their continuation was financially secure. For the year 1886 "Tristan and Isolde" was promised as well as "Parsifal." And now for the first time a work was to be produced in the sacred spot, that had not been studied under the eye of "the Master." To the joy of all it was announced that his widow, Frau Cosima Wagner, had invited Felix Mottl, the accomplished Wagnerian conductor and scholar, to direct "Tristan," and so we all flocked to Bayreuth full of hope.

* "If thou wilt not fondle and cherish,
We swiftly must wither and perish."

On this occasion I had been invited to be one of the musical assistants or *répétiteurs*. That is to say, I was to conduct rehearsals of the chorus and rehearsals at the piano. Before they had begun a great deal had been said at Villa Wahnfried about the difficulty there would be in trying to break the singers who were to take part in "Tristan" of bad habits acquired on the stage. That was easily to be understood, for alas! inartistic tricks in acting and musical diction are to be found even in highly gifted artists. What struck me unpleasantly was that those distinguished singers (I mean Niemann, Betz, Scaria, Vogl, and Mme. Materna) who Wagner had once with the most ideal devotion helped to embody his creations, were often objects of the most adverse criticism, as if Wagner had only made use of them because he was obliged and had experienced more pain than pleasure in so doing, which contrasted strangely with many passages in his writings. The reaction in favour of Vogl only set in after he had sung and acted the third act of "Tristan" at a piano rehearsal and in every-day dress, so movingly that he thereby gained the suffrage of the House of Wahnfried. At the rehearsals in the theatre Mme. Wagner herself undertook the direction, and up to a certain point put herself in the place of the departed "Master." Above all, she wanted to know how she could restrain the artists from what she considered over-acting. The outbursts of passion in which "Tristan" abounds were to be expressed only by small gestures—in fact, only hinted at. In attempting to break the actors of their bad theatrical habits she went much too far, for when they had adapted themselves as far as possible to her wishes and rehearsed according to her instructions, the scenic action remained without effect. Mottl, in the joy of being called to fill the conductor's desk at Bayreuth and revelling in his strength, simply romped through the music, so that he had to be recommended to moderate his *tempi*. Thereupon he fell into the opposite fault and dragged the time. From a strictly musical point of view this was not a bad fault, as the tone of the half-covered and very full orchestra had a really intoxicating effect and induced a gentle lethargy in the hearers, but when combined with the action on the stage it was only a

drag on it. "Things are at a standstill," it was said, and modifications were attempted. Here a gesture was to be more emphatic, there a passage to be taken in quicker time; and now the original individualities of the singers got the better of their desire to submit to Frau Wagner's behests, and in the end they did what they thought best, and this was for the good of the performance, for at that time Herr Kniese's "Artistic Training School" was not yet in existence, and people were still invited who really had individualities and knew what they could and would do and were not merely puppets—and where are such people needed more than in "Tristan," where everything depends on those few who are to embody the human figures of the musical drama? In this manner Frau Wagner was robbed of some of her authority on the stage, and she therefore turned all her attention to the orchestra and its conductor.

From a purely musical point of view Frau Wagner is what would be called an educated *dilettante*. Capable of playing the piano only to a very moderate extent, yet helped by her keen wit and fascinating personality, she understands how to talk loftily of music and its great masters, and to impress the uninitiated with a sense of her knowledge; but this knowledge would not bear the investigation of a real musical authority. She interfered in details of the orchestral execution, ordered the time and the shades of expression as if she had been the most capable and experienced of conductors; and for his part, the distinguished, but all too adaptable Mottl knew no higher object than to subordinate his wishes to hers, even when it went against his convictions. "In Bayreuth one must only serve," was a saying of his that was often quoted, and unfortunately only too often acted upon by some of the artists, who went so far as to completely surrender their individualities. Because Mottl, by his calculating behaviour, had gained the favour of the House of Wahnfried, he became an object of envy to many who thought that they would reach the same end by the like craftiness. Counsellors of the most different types pressed round Frau Wagner, and it became a regular race as to who should win her favour. Some of these counsellors were listened to more than others, and the result

was that uncertainty and perplexity reigned supreme at rehearsal. What was done on the stage did not harmonize with what was done in the orchestra; at one rehearsal this was settled, at the next that, and finally at the dress rehearsal there was still a great deal left undetermined. "Where is the master mind that will show us how it really should be done?" was said on all sides in varying tones. Truly *the* master could not return; but would it not have been better from the very beginning to have confided the chief command, without restrictions, to the conductor? Even if he were only "Kapellmeister," at least he could, out of his own feelings and knowledge, have created an organic whole. As it was, Frau Wagner attempted to shape the representations with very unpractised hands. She also often listened to unqualified advisers, and the difference between what was done to order, and what was done because it was really felt, became very noticeable. This being the case, no uniform picture was forthcoming, such as would be expected in what should have been a model performance. I have heard "Tristan" at Munich and at Leipzig, and passing over a few regrettable shortcomings in the former place, it was better and more powerfully given in both these towns than in Bayreuth, because there was a greater sense of unanimity about the whole.

I saw seven performances at Bayreuth, and in all it was the first act that succeeded best. In the great scene of the second act, the so so-called Day and Night discourse, and even to a greater extent in the the third act, the singers and the orchestra were not in touch with each other. The action of the drama almost ceases here, and the whole work becomes a great outpouring of the soul, a great monologue. In this important and difficult scene it is necessary, perhaps here more than in any other work, that there should be the most absolute comprehension of the situation on the part of the singer, combined with an orchestral accompaniment that should reflect its most intimate emotions. In the conductor the deepest feeling and passion must be combined with the most perfect sobriety in execution. But how was that possible here, where the conductor, besides undertaking the gigantic task that the work of "The Master" imposed upon him, was

bound to try at the same time to subordinate his will to the will of "The Mistress"? They did not quite hit it off in the short choruses in the first act because they were taken at a different *tempo* on the stage and in the orchestra. The fight at the door of the castle in the third act produced only a childish effect, and it was painfully evident that the guiding hand of Wagner was missing in the scenic as well as in the musical arrangements. The scenery in the courtyard of the castle, and also that of the garden in the second act, was beautiful, and in comparision the setting of the ship looked characterless and insipid. It was the actors who were the best part of the performance. Rosa Sucher gave a grand impersonation of Isolde, which alone would have sufficed to secure a brilliant success for the representation, and for which she has only her great artist's nature to thank, and not (as some would gladly have us believe) the teaching of Frau Wagner. Vogl and Gudehus ran each other very close as Tristan. Of the remaining artists (there were two for each part in the work), those who stood out from among the others were Frau Staudigl as Brangäne, Gura as King Mark, and Plank, who as Kurvenal was uncommonly powerful and full of feeling. In Karlsruhe, where he is free to follow his own intentions, Mottl is said to conduct very differently from what he does in Bayreuth; this was very likely the case with "Tristan." On the whole it was a good representation of an opera, carried out under extraordinary conditions and with extraordinary power; but it was no ideal performance of a musical-dramatic work of art, such as we had witnessed in 1882 and 1884, and again in 1886 in "Parsifal," which was now staged as nobly and as artistically as on the previous occasions.*

A new and excellent representation of Parsifal had arisen in Vogl. One person only was missing! On the opening day of the Festival of 1886, Scaria, the splendid and

* Franz Liszt made a telling and sharp-witted remark after he had seen "Tristan" at Bayreuth a few days before his death. In answer to my question, as to whether he was satisfied with the performance, he replied with one of his peculiar sarcastic smiles, "I believe that—under the existing circumstances—it could not have been better."

unsurpassed Gurnemanz, had died at Dresden. Of the new *régime* that began that year at Bayreuth he knew nothing, and so far nobody has been able to fill his place.

From this time forward I can only judge of the performances by the impression they made upon me. I cannot speak from personal experience of what went on behind the scenes, but only repeat what was told me by those who had their information from trustworthy sources. I was convinced that an independent development of one's powers was impossible "under the existing circumstances" at Bayreuth, and that to serve (*i.e.*, be untrue to oneself) and to wait in humble subservience for marks of favour was not at all in my line. I therefore left Bayreuth before the conclusion of the Festival of 1886, and since then have most carefully avoided any steps that might be taken for an attempt on my part to bring about a *rapprochement*. By so doing I have gained the privilege of being able to face Bayreuth as a free and independent artist, and of not being hindered in any wise in speaking out my inmost thoughts—truly an ungrateful task nowadays! Few realize that for once in a way some one will 'be found to act thus from conviction, and they do not take into consideration that plain-speaking, as a rule, only benefits others (namely, those who learn something from it), whereas it only gains for the speaker enmity and persecution, and profits him nothing. The wonderful thing is, that these unpleasant results have never been known to stop the mouth of such an outspoken one.

The next festival year, 1888, brought with it the best and the worst that Bayreuth, since Wagner's death, had to offer in the way of new productions. The performance of the "Meistersinger" was striking. In mounting the play the scenic directions of the Master had been exactly followed, and founded on these the staging was full of life and refinement. Those who took part in the representation attributed the chief credit to that excellent stage-manager, Fuchs, of the Munich Opera House, who had received the exact traditions from Wagner himself in 1868, when he rehearsed and conducted the first performance of the work in that town. Distinguished artists had been secured for the chief parts.

Who does not remember, besides Sachs, Eva, and Walter, the extremely characteristic Beckmesser of Friedrichs and the lovable and cheeky David of Hofmüller? Kniese, the newly-appointed director of the choir, had produced a masterpiece. The choruses were so perfectly sung that all laudatory expressions sound inadequate, and the scenic and musical portions of the performance (I mention only the close of the second act) combined so perfectly as to be eminently worthy of imitation. Hans Richter, the born conductor of the "Meistersinger," directed the orchestra. He had an intimate knowledge of his master's intentions and carried them out faithfully, and by the power of his authority he put aside every uncalled-for interference if one were ventured upon. Let me here call attention to one small point that would not be taken into consideration, when compared to all the excellence that the "Meistersinger" had to offer, had it not been characteristic of the system of "make-believe" that was for a time in vogue at Bayreuth (from what I heard afterwards I gathered that this system proved fatally bad, more especially in the case of "Tannhäuser"). At the end of the second act why did not the women pour really heavy streams of water on to the combatants below, as it is directed and as it was done in 1868 at Munich? If the women hold cans out of the windows and make the movement of pouring out and nothing comes, and yet those who are fighting are driven asunder, there is an unanswerable contradiction in the action that is made unnecessary and incomprehensible by the holding out of the cans. In a piece like the "Meistersinger," that with all its idealism is yet so realistic, not one realistic effect (moreover one that Wagner had expressly ordered) should be left out.

The production of the "Meistersinger" was a real triumph for Bayreuth, and more especially for the way in which it was put upon the stage. This was all the more delightful, for in the same year something strange and unaccountable had happened to "Parsifal." Levi was ill, and the musical direction was entrusted to Mottl, and surely nobody could find anything to say against that. But what was the meaning of the reports that filled the air?—"At Wahnfried they are delighted to have at last got rid of Levi. Now 'Parsifal' is

in the right hands, and for the first time it will be conducted in a 'Christian' manner and will appear as a new work." Levi had studied and conducted "Parsifal" under the eye of the Master, and had become absolutely identified with the work. His conducting of the same is a production of the first rank. His successor could not and ought not to do more than carefully administer the treasure that had been confided to his care, for it was nothing less than the inheritance of the Master himself. If Richter can be called the musical custodian of the "Meistersinger," then Levi can with equal justice lay claim to the same title with reference to "Parsifal." I myself have been witness of the exaggerated marks of gratitude and praise that Frau Wagner lavished upon Levi after many representations of "Parsifal" that have been specially successful. Why, then, this sudden change of front? Because Levi was a Jew? Was he any less a Jew in 1882, and did he therefore conduct any the less well? You may feel either enmity or friendship for the Semitic race, you may take up any attitude you like towards them on national, artistic, ethical, or æsthetic grounds, but it will always be small and unworthy to make on principle a single individual the object of this enmity for no other reason than the difference of race. In the present case, especially, the esteem due to the great artist Levi should certainly not have been forgotten, not even for a racial question. This would always be a personal affair, that should not be considered when judging the performances, had not these, after Wagner had finally established them, appeared so altered this year that it was impossible to put it all down to artistic reasons. Nothing essential had been changed in the mounting, but musically the work had become positively a new one, and not in the complimentary sense of the word. It was conducted in such a dragging and mutilated *tempo* that all feeling for melody and the natural continuity of the music was utterly lost. Almost every *tempo* that had been engraved on our consciousness and had been immovably fixed since 1882 was turned upside down. The second act came off the best, and there was much left in it that called to remembrance the previous years, but the first and last were unrecognizable. Let

only one detail be mentioned : the pauses in the overture at the entry of the Grail theme were so painfully drawn out that they positively made one anxious. For the rest, it is sufficient to prove by figures what I mean. The first act lasted about twenty minutes, the last, at least a quarter of an hour longer than formerly. Put it before yourself that, as I can assert from experience, the time the "Rheingold" takes in playing, when it is conducted by a Kapellmeister who is inclined to drag the time and then by a conductor who is given to hurry the time, can only be made to vary by eight, or at most ten, minutes, and then judge what prolongations were necessary to lengthen one act alone by more than fifteen minutes. "Mottl has the only correct *tempo*," Frau Wagner declared categorically ; many believed this, and, as was solemnly announced in post-prandial speeches, "'Parsifal is saved.'" On what grounds ? There were many rumours and suppositions abroad, but never a valid explanation. The simplest thing would have been to believe in "the temporary aberration of the intellect" of those who directed affairs, were it not that the news of this so-called "salvation" had been already delicately intimated to the public and the absolute correctness of the new *tempo* prophesied by the initiated. They had therefore done it with a purpose. "Lohengrin," that I saw six years later, came off even worse, because the scenery was also a failure ; but at least in this case there were no assured traditions to go upon, and it was still possible to ascribe the numerous grave faults to ignorance. In "Parsifal," however, it was impossible to make a mistake. Every one knew how it ought to be done, and the simply destructive encroachments from which the work suffered had been wittingly created, and for reasons that were a puzzle to every one but the guilty parties. The representations of "Parsifal" in 1888 were one of the greatest artistic crimes, the greatest of all, perhaps, that Bayreuth has ever perpetrated. Let us hope that there are no more like it to follow.

The effect of this exaggerated dragging of the time was disastrous, not only for the work immediately concerned, but also for the art of music as a whole. As it is always that which is maddest and worst that is most willingly aped

(witness the epidemic of blood-curdling one-act operas that raged at one time), so it was presently everywhere the fashion to drag the time, not only in Wagner, but later also in Mozart, Weber, and even in Meyerbeer and Italian opera. The new gospel of the slow time was also preached in the concert-room, and soon every fresh energetic *tempo* seemed to have disappeared like every drop of blood from the hollow-cheeked faces of the young Bayreuthians. "He has the true Bayreuth *tempo*," it was declared, or, as one witty Berlin musician is said to have expressed it, "he Mottlizes." Add to this, that Bülow, now no longer young, had already begun to incite others to exaggeration by arbitrariness in his conception and rendering of individual pieces of music. Soon this dragging of the *tempo à la* Bayreuth and these distortions *à la* Bülow, knowing the affinity of their natures, entered into the bond of matrimony, and brought forth a strange child, that was nothing else than the *Tempo-rubato* conducting, that I have once before attacked with much energy. Already it shows signs of a premature old age, like all things that are not genuine; but yet it still flourishes here and there, and undermines every healthy feeling by its disastrous affectation. One of the numerous victims offered to the "Bayreuth *tempo*" is the "Rienzi" overture, that for a time was much played after "the new conception." This piece is bubbling over with youthful spirits, chivalrous, somewhat crude, but not trivial. Compare its want of effect when conducted by a true apostle of Wahnfried to the revolution that it can produce when for once it is played in the right manner.

In the year 1889 "Parsifal," the "Meistersinger," and "Tristan" were given. "Tristan" I never heard again in Bayreuth. Since the previous year (1888) the representations of the "Meistersinger" had fallen off. There was not so much "go" about them. It is said that Richter, detained by his London engagements, came to Bayreuth only for the last rehearsals, and left the early ones in other hands. Such a division of labour does not guarantee a faultless success, and should not be allowed—least of all at Bayreuth. "Parsifal" was again conducted by Levi, and the correct *tempi* were fortunately reinstated. They even went so far as to try and

hush up the fact that anything had ever been altered; but the same feeling of sanctity did not pervade the whole as before. A foreign element had taken the place of those that had been sanctified by time. The Fleming (?) van Dyck sang Parsifal. He put into the representation of the "Pure Fool" more than all his predecessors, and his conception of the character was the admirable result of deep study. Only his foreign accent was a disturbing element. It was the same with Blauvaert, the excellent Mefistophele in Berlioz's "Damnation de Faust." He took the greatest pains with Gurnemanz, but the deep inner meaning of the *rôle* was beyond the virtuoso singer. However, it was just the chief fault (the disturbing foreign accent) of both artists that was not felt by the greater part of the audience, for Bayreuth had become *international*.

If many honourable German friends of Bayreuth withdrew from the Festivals after the representations of "Parsifal" in 1888, the flight in the following year was even greater, when the magic of the "Meistersinger" was not so powerful as before. All the greater was the stream of visitors from foreign lands. Gradually Wagner's works had been given in theatres outside Germany. The news had gone abroad that model performances were to be seen in Bayreuth, and impresários were the first to hurry there in order to pick up useful information for their respective theatres. Then came the reporters of the big newspapers, followed by the public, which began—now that the Germans were holding back—to form the chief contingent among the visitors, and thus to support Bayreuth financially. To keep a hold on the interest of this public, and to increase it, was now Bayreuth's chief aim. France, and more particularly England and America, still practise the "Star System." Into a second-rate *ensemble* a few celebrated names are incorporated, who are made responsible for the success and profit of the representation, without any pity for it as a whole. People no longer go to the opera to hear some particular work, but to listen to some famous singer. They are proud of their "stars," make long journeys to hear them, and overwhelm them with honours of all kinds. Now, the most natural thing to do, was by securing such foreign celebrities to attract as many foreign visitors and worshippers

as possible, and so to ensure for themselves at the same time a full cash-box, enthusiastic applause, and brilliant notices in foreign newspapers from critics, whose national vanity had been gratefully tickled by the respect paid to their own particular "star." This idea was carried out by degrees. More and more often one heard of this or that *coryphée* from over the seas, who had been called to Bayreuth to "create" some rôle, and in "Lohengrin" this system reached its culminating point.

Annoyed by the experience of the former years I did not attend the Festivals from 1889 to 1894, and did not hear "Tannhäuser" in Bayreuth. Even believing supporters of Frau Wagner's régime find it an embarrassing subject of conversation. They try by hook and by crook to say something complimentary, but cannot do so sincerely, and are constantly obliged to take refuge in qualified statements when they meet unprejudiced criticism. For the sake of "Lohengrin" I again undertook the pilgrimage to Bayreuth, for I was curious to see what sort of effect this intimate glorious creation of the German master would produce, in a representation in which all the parts, with the exception of the King and the Herald, were taken by foreign artists. It was a curious experience. I heard the last performance, and was told afterwards that an unlucky star had hovered over it. I am however of opinion that the small accidents that sometimes happen, even in the most carefully prepared performances, can only impair the impression made by an otherwise good representation, at most to those who have gone with the intention of finding fault. But that which I saw and heard in this performance of "Lohengrin" cannot only have been the result of this unlucky star. Lohengrin and Elsa sang in such an affected manner, with such unnatural *portamenti*, out of all time and rhythm, that you could almost imagine it was Gounod's Faust and Margaret in the dress of a Wagnerian opera that you had before you. In the third act Lohengrin sang so out of tune that he ended by making the whole chorus sing unbearably flat. That could, if necessary, be put down to the influence of this unlucky star, but I was told it had not happened only in the performance at which I

was present. Elsa's chief trick consisted in breathing out melodious phrases so *pianissimo* that when she had done, all the "ladies" and "gentlemen" present broke out into admiring "Achs!" To sing like this in "*Lohengrin*" is a mannerism at once inartistic, un-German, and offensive. Ortrud and Telramund were a genuinely villainous pair. The "make-believe" that had before been so much in favour and which, among other things, had caused the ridiculous mistakes in "*Tannhäuser*" (*i.e.*, when the flying cupids in the Bacchanal scene did not really shoot off their arrows, but flew past with their bows strung and the darts ready to be discharged), this "make-believe" seemed, after the evident failure of "*Tannhäuser*," to have proved itself too ineffective, and they had recourse to undoubtedly more effective exaggerations. When Telramund raves like a madman, and Ortrud, at the end of the second act, before she has to make the threatening gesture at Elsa, sweeps across the whole breadth of the stage with snake-like movements, then we had exactly that which Bayreuth ought not and does not wish to be, a "theatre" in the worst sense of the word. During the whole evening very little correct German pronunciation was to be heard. One could hardly blame the artists for that, but were there not in all Germany enough singers who could under proper guidance have carried out these duties better and at least have spared us the jargon caused by the mixture of so many different accents? Naturally the foreign visitors were not put out by it, and the honest Germans thought it quite delightful for once in a way to hear "*Lohengrin*" in a distorted version of their native tongue. Many even poured out vials of wrath on those who found anything to say against it. Frau Wagner called Frau Nordica's operatically flavoured Elsa the "triumph of foreign art." This was the state of affairs in Wagner's German Festival Theatre in the year 1894.

In many respects the staging was awkward and positively clashed with Wagner's directions. The performance of "*Lohengrin*" that was given almost simultaneously at Munich, and which raised such a storm of indignation, because it seemed by its close proximity to enter into rivalry with Bayreuth, was infinitely more successful and lifelike. Even if one did

not wish to agree with a few of the unessential details (*i.e.*, the appearance of the Bishop in the second act), yet one felt that a man had directed the representations to whom that which was "demoniacal on the stage" had been literally and not only metaphorically revealed. What was particularly striking in Bayreuth was the inclination to impart life to the crowds by a military marching to and fro of the men (first scene of the first act, and also in the third act), and the formation of two concentric circles, of which one turned to the left and the other to the right (close of the first and second acts). Nearly all the movements of the chorus looked as if they were performed automatically, and a quick eye could detect the anxious look-out kept by the singers on the wings, where the man stood who had to give the expected signal. This kind of drilling of great numbers is tiring to watch and also often ridiculous. Thus for instance, at the close of the first act, the way the branches of the trees were all of a sudden lifted into the air and waved to and fro in even time. A crowd begins to express its excitement by such signs only by degrees (think how it would be in reality!), and at the instigation of a few, never as if at the word of command. And then one ought to have seen how the people in their growing excitement broke the boughs from the trees, for how was it that so many boughs were there ready to hand upon the stage? The stage manager, *bien entendu*, contents himself with the simple answer: "They lie there piled up in the wings." In Bayreuth there should be no place for such evident carelessness.

Wagner directs that Lohengrin, before he advances to fight the trial by battle, should give Elsa over to the protection of the King. But does that mean that Elsa, as it was done at Bayreuth, ought to place herself beside the King on the throne? She was certainly a princess and had claims to royal honours, but she is accused of a terrible crime, and even if the King were convinced of her innocence, he, least of all, should take her side openly, before the combat is decided and the judgment thereby pronounced. After when the King made ready to say the prayer, they both rose at the same moment, made courtly inclinations to each other and the King descended the steps of the throne. Now Wagner had supervised the

staging of "Lohengrin" both at Vienna and Munich, and did he ever order such nonsense, for you cannot call such managerial tricks anything else? Certainly not! Elsa placed herself near the King, almost at the foot of the throne, and remained there till she was led by him to Lohengrin, and with the cry "O fänd 'ich Jubelweisen!"* hurries towards her champion. In the second act Wagner orders that the Herald, after his harangue to the knights, should withdraw into the castle. The Herald, however, descended the steps, mingled in the crowd, where the men placing their hands under his arms revolved with him, naturally in a circle. How little does this befit the relations in which a Herald stood towards the knights. In the third act, when Telramund forces his way into the bridal chamber, we find the following stage directions: "Elsa, who has thrown herself into Lohengrin's arms, sinks slowly to the ground at his feet in a faint." What happened at Bayreuth? Telramund, slain by Lohengrin, falls to earth and the nobles on to their knees, and at the same instant Elsa, as if struck by lightning, measured her length at Lohengrin's feet, so that at one moment there were seven upright figures, and the next, only one, and six prone upon the ground. By its very suddenness it was a stirring *coup de théâtre* that forced a movement of surprise from all those who were present. But what would Wagner have said to the changes made in his so delicately thought-out directions? These are only a few examples, and by no means exhaust the catalogue of sins.

For the first time the acoustics of the half covered-in orchestra were disappointing, and sounded dull and without charm. The whole blame could not be laid on the screen that covers it in, for the far more thinly instrumented "Meistersinger" sounded magnificently. The great *ensemble* passages of the first and second acts went very unsteadily and uncertainly. The "Bayreuth *Tempo*" flourished as it did, in the luckless "Parsifal" of 1888, and spread its long-drawn-out endless threads over the whole work, like a monstrous spider does her web, so that for the first and only time "Lohengrin" seemed to be too long.

* "Oh, could I only find expression for my joy!"

Yet one other occurrence of the 1894 Festival must be mentioned here, and alas! it also concerned "Parsifal." One fine day Frau Nordica threatened to leave the place if her future husband did not sing Parsifal — and he did sing Parsifal—certainly only once, but in such a manner that even friendly critics characterized his performance with a word which I dare not here repeat. If one reads in the *piquant* court *memoirs* of earlier times that the ruler of some insignificant principality allowed his mistress to manage his theatre, one can console oneself from the experience, that love generally does get the better of reason. But if this happens in Bayreuth, the place where the works of one of the greatest geniuses found their home, so that his own wife has to sacrifice his sacred injunctions to the caprice of a prima donna, then that is a method of proceeding that cannot be too strongly denounced.

It has been thrown in my teeth that I reasoned without being able to prove my assertions, when I stated, and drew conclusions therefrom, in my pamphlets on "Conducting" and on "Dilettantism, Tricks of the Trade, and Patronage" that such things would not have come to pass if Bülow, in the fulness of his power as an artist and a man, had succeeded Wagner at the head of affairs. Although the attentive reader can hardly have failed to perceive the proofs for himself, yet, all the same, I will repeat them clearly as a summary of what I have already said. The invitation of artistically unsuitable singers, with the object of attracting foreign visitors, was a trick of the trade, and a very paying one. No wise person well deny that Bayreuth had to make receipts, even big receipts, to be able to keep up the old operas and to mount new ones. But they ought to have gone forward more slowly. "Parsifal," which can be acted nowhere else in the world, and which now hardly costs them anything, would, if it had been worthily given, have brought in enough money to enable them to let Wagner's other works appear at longer intervals. The Festivals of 1884 and 1886 were moreover well attended, that of 1888 brilliantly so. If "Parsifal" had not been so incomprehensibly changed, Bayreuth's success in 1888 would have been in all respects complete, and there would have been no

necessity to call in the aid of foreign attractions. Even if the Wagner family do not make anything by the Festivals (and no one doubts that), yet the purely artistic interests should never be sacrificed to the material, not even with the intention of gaining an object more quickly, because by so doing the ideal character that Wagner desired for the Festivals, and which outwardly every one wishes to have acknowledged, would be at once lost. Above all, I call the way the crowds were drilled in "Lohengrin" amateur, and further, inartistic. There was also a want of understanding that showed up the managerial tricks—for example, when Elsa stamps her foot like a spoilt child to whom a toy is denied as Lohengrin resists her pressing questions as to his name. Then again Frau Wagner's interference in purely musical concerns with which she is not sufficiently familiar. Certainly in this respect the greatest guilt must be laid at the door of the non-*dilettanti*, or perhaps sometimes even at that of the docile "Herren Dirigenten," who had no wills of their own, and sacrificed their convictions simply for the honour of having conducted in Bayreuth. Had more people possessed of backbone been there, then Herr Siegfried Wagner would certainly not have dared to write his idiotic letter recently published in *Die Redenden Künste*. It has already been several times categorically answered. Finally, for what concerns Frau Nordica in the above-mentioned incidents connected with "Parsifal," patronage is a mild term. I think I have said enough to prove my case.

To make a friendly bridge to the following criticism of the representations of the "Nibelungen" Tetralogy of this year (1896) in so far as they deserve it, let me enumerate that little which was good and excellent in "Lohengrin." Grengg gave a magnificent rendering of the part of the King. What good it did one to hear a real native German singer! The chorus was remarkably fine, more especially that of the men in the second act. The effect of the chorus, "In Früh'n versammelt uns der Ruf" ("The summons calls us early") simply carried one away. It was not the fault of its members that later on they sang flat. In the third act the big Bayreuth stage was transformed with noteworthy art into the small bridal

chamber. Childlike pages bearing lights opened the door, and proportionately few people appearing upon the scene the very intimate character of the incident was retained. Lohengrin's first appearance was very impressive. When the first cry, "The swan!" thrills through the crowd, it is immediately mastered by a feeling of expectancy, which presently grows to an outburst of joy. At that moment certainly no one present could fail to share in the general emotion. Here then we had—alas! only for one minute—what Wagner really wanted; namely, that his work of art should appear to *be a brilliant improvisation of the actors*. It is true that the stage crowds are trained to produce this effect. But this was not discernible, and that was—ART! The success of the above-mentioned dramatic moment and of those who took part in it made it seem doubly regrettable that all the rest had failed so signally.

II.

THE representations of the "Nibelungen," that were given to celebrate the twenty years' Jubilee of the Festivals, did not reach the same point of excellence as the "Meistersinger" of 1888, but—be it said with heartfelt pleasure—attained a higher level than anything offered by Bayreuth since that date. Of the first cycle I heard little that was complimentary, even from those who are easily moved to sing pæans of praise. I was therefore all the more agreeably surprised by what I saw and heard at the second. The real reason for this well-founded higher estimation will become evident later on; in the meantime let the single items be considered. Let us begin with the musical part. The first conviction that forced itself upon one was, that either Frau Wagner had come to her senses and had discovered that the long-drawn-out *tempi*, that she had up till then prescribed, resulted only in unnatural and paralyzing effects, and tended to make the general impression of the work of art a disappointing one, or else that Mottl, who conducted the second cycle magnificently, proved himself more independent than before. Already in the "Rheingold" it struck me that the notorious "Bayreuth *Tempo*" had disappeared. An energetic and life-giving sense of progress was again heard where it was wanted, and broad passages were no longer so distorted as to allow single notes only to be heard and not the whole phrase. This observation was confirmed during the three following evenings, and was stimulating and cheering. In one word, the orchestra played magnificently, as well on the dynamic and rhythmic as on the thematic side; the tone was entrancingly beautiful, and it never played too loud. I should like here to express some purely personal views on the *tempi* in the "Nibelungen." In the first act of the "Walküre," as well as in that of "Siegfried," an incident is represented in which an elementary uncontrollable power leads up to the central situation of the scene—in the "Walküre" the powerful, all-consuming passion of Sieg-

mund and Sieglinde; in "Siegfried" the holy, irresistible inspiration to complete the sword. The music expresses the innermost and most intimate soul of the situation and its primordial power, never checked but ever increasing, should also be expressed in the *tempi* by a continuous *crescendo* that lasts during the whole incident. Naturally there are *decrescendi* and *ritenuti*, but I should like to express this problem, that is simply a matter of feeling and difficult to exhaust in words: "The conductor should draw over the whole scene an ever-rising, never-interrupted line of waves." This harmonious line I missed in the above-mentioned scenes; they seemed to me to be too much broken up into details. It is only by the steady, irresistible *crescendo* that is to be found indicated in Wagner's directions as to the time, that the increasing *tempo* of the orchestral postlude which rises at moments almost to frenzy can be expressed, for when it has not been led up to, but strikes up suddenly, it does more to check the receptive mood than it does to explain. Further, a motive often appears at first independently, either to introduce one of the characters or to prepare for some event, and then in the same form, but as the accompaniment of the artist. In the last case ought it not to be taken rather quicker—I should say less emphatically—than before? For instance, in the second scene of the "Rheingold," if the whole conversation between Wotan and the giants were taken in the time of the first giant motive, then intelligent speaking and singing would be made impossible for the actors without their cutting up the words and phrases. The same occurs in the third act of "Siegfried" at the words * "Ein Vöglein schwatzt wohl Manches," and from then onwards. If the conductor does not make things move quickly, then the artists do it for themselves, from a right feeling for the expression of the phrases in question. The conductor must then do his best to make the orchestra keep up with them, and unpleasant vacillations are the result. As a witness of the scene told me once, at a rehearsal of the "Rheingold," when it was being too pathetically treated, Wagner called out to the artists, "Be

* "A little bird chatters a great deal."

more light in hand, my children ; this is a comedietta we are playing." The spirit and not the words of this remark should be laid to heart. A more graceful *tempo* would have been also desirable in the scene of the Rhine Daughters in the "Götterdämmerung." As far as the singing was concerned the Rhine Daughters were in every respect the weak point of the performance ; their voices did not harmonize, and they sang very flat. It should also be mentioned here that the Wood Bird was most undoubtedly placed far too much in the background ; neither word nor voice was to be distinguished.

The decorative and technical parts of the representations were generally successful. It is true that just the most difficult scenic problems seemed to be as little satisfactorily solved at Bayreuth as elsewhere. We make an exception for the first scene at the bottom of the Rhine. None who saw with what real grace the Rhine Daughters swam, how freely they moved, and yet with no apparent support, how they lived through the waters with the speed of lightning in perfect unison with the music, now united and then again far apart, would ever again be able to tolerate the clumsy bathing machines that till then had been in use. The Rhinegold itself shone out much too late. When Flosshilde sings the words,* "Schaut er lächelt in lichtem Schein," it ought already to have begun to glow, so as to be in full splendour at the words "Heiajaheia." Would it also not have been possible for the golden gleam that is supposed to shine from the highest point of the rock, to have been more imaginatively represented than by the bright speck of light that finally appeared ? The eye was well satisfied by the change between the two scenes, but the ear was disturbed by noise. This is a shortcoming that could easily be rectified. In the same manner the clouds of steam that rise when Alberich makes himself invisible ought not to give out so much sound. At this point it was impossible to hear the *pianissimo* stopped horns that play the so-called "Tarnhelm" motive. The pillar of smoke that represents Alberich as he makes a stormy exit glided away lowly ; it should have disappeared more quickly. The

* "See it smiles in bright radiance."

snake into which the dwarf transforms himself appeared only a few beats after it should have been visible, as indicated by the music. In Bayreuth they ought to attend more carefully than they do to the harmonious co-operation of the music and the action, for this is most necessary for the general effect. The stage picture of Nibelheim was in perfect harmony with the spirit of the scene. It might be questioned whether the bright-red glowing steam that rose from the cleft in the background did not make Loge's words, * "Durch *bleiche* Nebel was blitzen dort feurige Funken," a contradiction. Unquestionably the Rainbow Bridge must be absolutely altered when the closing scene of the "Rhinegold" is repeated. The effect of the small bit of rainbow, painted in pale, insignificant colours, and on which the gods did not dare to step, but contented themselves with Wotan stretching out his foot towards it, was pitiable. The scenery of the second act of the "Walküre" was remarkably beautiful, but some technical method ought to be found by which such very apparent steps in the property rocks could be avoided. In prehistoric times of uncertain date there were as yet no Alpine Societies to make the difficult paths easy for the tourists by cutting steps in the rocks for them. Possibly they are not out of place in the second act of the "Götterdämmerung," for it might be supposed that the inhabitants had made the path up to the sacrificial stone more comfortable. Even then I do not admire them, and in the second act of the "Walküre," where the scene is laid far from all human habitation, they are very out of place. Again, why is the light suddenly turned full upon Siegmund as he stands on the spur of the mountain ready for the fight with Hunding? Was that an oversight, or was it done on purpose? It ought to be just possible to distinguish the outlines of the combatants through the thick clouds, which are from time to time lit up by flashes of lightning. † "Könnt ich sie sehen!" cries Sieglinde. It is only the white light that emanates from Brünnhilde, and the red light that emanates from Wotan, that should light up the

* What fiery sparks are flashing there through the *pale* mist."

† "Could I but see them!"

spur of the mountain. The half-hidden diminutive Valkyries on their tiny horses did not give one the idea of the courageous warrior maidens who fly through the air. It is, however, difficult to satisfy the imagination on this point. In Vienna the ride of the Valkyries is done with real horses, in Paris a mechanical switchback is used. I maintain that the best of all, is clouds driven by the wind, and from time to time brilliantly lighted up by lightning, and on these clouds is thrown, perhaps by a reflector, the image of a Valkyrie. But a great deal must always be left in this scene to the imagination of the spectator.

On all four evenings the cloud *technique* stood the test (if I may use the expression) remarkably. I have never seen the various passing clouds and mists of heaven so truly and yet so artistically represented as this year (1896) at Bayreuth. I call attention only to the fiery mists in "Siegfried," as they floated downwards, and to the rising mists of the Rhine, and their gradual dispersion at Siegfried's death. Sometimes a cloud effect was brought directly into connection with the action, so as to heighten its significance. That is extremely dangerous, and can very easily become theatrical if it is not carried out, as it was in this case, with the greatest discretion and delicacy. During the great melody in E major, after Wotan's words, * "Denn Einer nur freie die Braut, der freier als ich der Gott," ! the setting of the sun was seen in the heavens, expressed by a tender illumination of the clouds. The departing sun and the departing god ! That produced a most moving effect, as did also the short blood-red flash on the horizon, already darkening towards night, when Wotan pronounces his incantation, † "Wie dann einst du wir schwindest als schweifende Lohe." Imagination pictures the Fire God sweeping towards you, a mass of flames, on darkly glowing wings. In the third act of "Siegfried," when the Wanderer breaks out into the words ‡ "Es (das Vöglein) floh dir zu seinem Heil," and his mood changes suddenly to one of

* "Only he shall woo the bride who is freer than I, the god."

† "As once you vanished before me as Will-o'-the-wisp."

‡ "He (the bird) flew from you for its good."

depression and threatening, the sky darkened and the clouds raced wildly along, as if they once again could share the anger of the old Father of the Gods, before the matchless hero strikes the mighty spear into pieces. These were truly great moments ! *

The so-called "Fire Spell" was not particularly successful. That Wotan is himself the first to be surrounded by the flames of Loge, whom he has raised by his incantation, and that then he should direct the flame with his spear into a circle round the rock, was certainly not put into execution. A modern firework display should be absolutely avoided. The Roman candles that were let off from behind the rocks were childish ; also, I consider it most undesirable that the roaring of the wind in the first act of the "Walküre" should be heard before the curtain goes up. Stage effects from behind closed curtains are familiar in "Dinorah" and "Cavalleria" ; in Wagner they should be strictly prohibited. It is only when the stage picture is visible that knowledge of what is happening there can reach us. The scenery of the first act of "Siegfried" was beautiful, that of the third grand, but the second was less successful. The cleft in which Alberich had his den looked, not without reason, like a great mole-hill. It, however, took up too much room, so that there was not space enough left for the forest. Here the scenery ought to bring out the sunny, friendly character of this forest, if it is to inspire Siegfried during the "Waldweben" (Forest Murmurs) with so many tender thoughts and so much food for reflection. Why

* If these directions originated from Herr Siegfried Wagner, then, in them, he has given proof of capability. Unfortunately, one must always receive the news that is sent from Bayreuth into the world at large with a grain of salt. Quite lately it was said in several newspapers, that after the fourth Cycle, which as every one knows was conducted by the "Master Siegfried" (as he is already called in Bayreuth), the orchestra had sent him a deputation, begging that he would conduct the fifth Cycle instead of Richter ! A few inquiries made of individual members of the Bayreuth orchestra showed this fabulous report to be absolutely without foundation. No, no ! Of all kinds of artists the German orchestral player still bears the highest character, and does not let himself be so easily overpersuaded into doing anything that goes against the grain. A few sycophants may possibly be found in the profession, and if perhaps some men of that stamp did attempt to get up such an intrigue in Siegfried Wagner's favour, the intention certainly never even reached the ears of all the members of the orchestra.

did not the sword glow when Siegfried drew it from the fire? No one can forge cold iron. Also Siegfried struck the anvil with the hammer more often than the sword. It is a mistake of the management to let Mime stretch himself in perfect comfort on Siegfried's couch whilst this one forges. Siegfried would have chased him off it, as one would chase a mangy dog that had crept into one's bed. Fafner, the dragon, should look as if he belonged to the lizard family, and not be represented with the head of a hippopotamus. He should appear lazy as to the possession of the ring, but terrible in power as its master. Also, he did not come straight out from the background of the cavern, but sideways. If this is easier for the *technique* of the apparatus, then let them paint the cavern more on one side, but it would be better if both dragon and cavern were seen full face. The fight was certainly not convincing. The little puffs of smoke that came out of the nose of the hippopotamus did not realize one's idea of a gigantic fabulous creature, vomiting forth fire from its nostrils. Siegfried did not spring over the back of the animal, and Fafner did not raise the forepart of his body sufficiently, so that Siegfried (as in most other theatres) had to let his sword disappear somewhere about his side, instead of thrusting it into the dragon's heart. The movements of the creature's mouth were well done, but the voice of the singer did not sound as if it came from inside Fafner's body, but from one side; also it sounded too weak, too human, in spite of its harshness. Possibly the fault lay in the fact that the speaking-trumpet was too small. It is only when he is mortally wounded that the voice takes a softer, more touching tone. Wagner knew perfectly well what he was doing when he ordered the use of two speaking-trumpets. If only his directions were always carried out! Fafner's appearance is better managed in many theatres (more especially in Munich) than at Bayreuth. Later on, when Siegfried is supposed to thrust the body of the dead dragon into the cavern, it was still for a long time visible after Siegfried had ceased pushing, and it seemed to prefer to withdraw as a moving corpse into its den of its own free will. In Bayreuth no pains should be spared to put such

scenes, that are so easily made ridiculous, faultlessly upon the stage. That Mime has to pretend to take refuge behind the dragon's body so that Siegfried may kill him there, facilitates the change between the real Mime and the dummy that Siegfried later on throws back into the cavern. It however looks unnatural and artificial, as the use of a so-called dummy always must. Mime is much too cowardly to venture of himself near to the jaws of the dead Fafner. If a true picture is to be created, then Fafner's gigantic dead body must be the background instead of the cave; Siegfried should stand nearer the front of the small hill that is before the den, and Mime should creep up the rising path that leads to it till at last he gets quite near to Siegfried. The Wood Bird was most unpoetically represented. Without any noticeable action of the wings, it was drawn in a series of jerky movements fairly slowly across the stage. I hunted in vain for it in the third act. In the same act the change of scene through the fiery clouds was a veritable triumph of stage management and scenery.

The scene of the Norns at the beginning of the "Götterdämmerung" was most inspiring. It was a good idea that each Norn, so long as she spins and sings, should be illuminated by a special magic light of her own, so that the inner illumination should be visible at the same time, only then this light ought not to touch the surrounding scenery, but rest exclusively on the one figure to whom it belongs. In the next change of scenes to the Hall of the Gibichungen the deep blue colour of the water was too striking. It was the blue of the Lake of Como at Bellaggio, not that of the Rhine. Why did Hagen persistently turn his back on Gunther and Gutrunie all the time he sat at the table with them? It was a grave mistake of the stage management that the boat, with Siegfried on board, arrives floating against the stream, whilst Siegfried quietly holds his horse. This boat is not driven by any supernatural power, not even a demonical; Siegfried ought simply to row it. At the end of the second act of the "Götterdämmerung" the stiff-legged stuffed sacrificial bulls that were pushed on to the stage seemed to me as unnatural as the rams in Fricka's chariot in the "Walküre." The first

scene of the third act is very beautiful. It is possible that here the swimming of the Rhine Daughters might be made to appear more natural. It looked as if they were walking about in the water in a shallow part. In the final scene of the "Götterdämmerung" Wagner's directions were faithfully carried out, but to those who sat in front, the children, who were placed far back so as to make them appear of the necessary smallness, and who represented the gods, contrasted too much with the figures that were painted on the flat background, and these looked too large in proportion. The destruction of the Hall was too ghastly, and reminded one vividly of "*Le Prophète*." How could men and women remain alive in a house that had been visited with such destruction? They all stood quietly in the front of the stage whilst the roof fell to pieces over their heads. The fire of the funeral pyre ought at most to touch the Hall, but not enough to obstruct the view of the background. The paper Brünnhilde that flew into the flames was simply comic. In Munich, Frau Vogl has made it possible to spring on to a horse, that she has broken in herself, and to leap with it into the blazing pile of logs. Side by side with much that was really excellent, both decoratively and technically, there was also much that was wanting; still, as a whole, the scenery of the "Nibelungen" is far better at Bayreuth than in other places. The tasks set by Wagner are so immense, that it is only often repeated attempts that will lead to the final goal, and every suggestion that helps forward that object ought to be gratefully received. It is impossible to say much that is complimentary of the dresses. Here an attempt at unwholesome originality was apparent, that was entirely unsuited to the style of the work. To begin with, the three Rhine Daughters appeared, to the astonishment of all, in three different colours, pink, white, and blue. They are beings born of the element in which they live, they ought, so to speak, to personify it, and therefore can only appear in the colour of this element—a bluey-green, exactly the colour of the surrounding waters. Furthermore, part of their hair was dressed in the latest fashion. Who is the hairdresser at the bottom of the Rhine who turned them out so well? One pictures them to oneself

as having hair and limbs wreathed fantastically in reeds and water flowers, but everything that suggests the fashions of to-day should be most carefully avoided for these beings. In "Rheingold" the way they dived and swam charmed and surprised one, and besides that, the curtain that represented the green waters partly hid what was faulty, so that it was all the more noticeable in "Götterdämmerung." Call these young ladies "Les filles du Rhin," if you like, but never the "Rhine Daughters." What did Freia look like? She wore a pinky-violet dress, with large dark flowers either woven into the fabric or embroidered on it. It was held up round the waist with a girdle, and had mediæval German puffed sleeves. Frau Wagner seems to have a strong predilection for such sleeves, for Fricka, Gutrun, and Waltraute were also got up à la *Gretchen*. I did not find anything to say against the much-abused dress of Froh. It was the colour of young leaves, and that did very well for him.* On the other hand, Fafner and Fasolt were simply comic—the first black as a charcoal-burner, and the second white as an Arctic hare. As they stood side by side they looked like the iced chocolate cakes in the confectioner's shop. The noble Gunther appeared as one of the kings in a pack of cards, and his vassals did not realize the picture one imagined for oneself of what German giants were like. They were too feeble, too modern. Such figures would do very well at a "mediæval German masked ball." In the present case that which is roughest-looking is also the most correct. Why did not Hagen and his vassals use bulls' horns instead of gracefully-twisted metal instruments, the very look of which betrayed that they could not possibly give out the powerful notes that struck the ear? (The story is, that they were copied from metal horns found in Sweden that can be proved to belong to primeval ages. That may be; the purely historical has no value whatsoever on the stage. Let those who want information on this point refer to Wagner's writings.)

The most interesting and important factor of the Festival was the artists who took part in it. Let it be said beforehand

*I was told afterwards that it is said to have been altered for the second Cycle.

that the usual bad tricks, that one hoped to have the right to find discarded in Bayreuth, were still very noticeable. For instance, singing to the audience over the footlights, the anxious gaze fixed on the conductor, the extremely bad custom of coming too much to the front of the stage, and an apparent want of interest in what is going on when not singing. In all this the representations were little different from the operas of old times. These reasons are sufficient for there being for the moment no question of a distinct "Bayreuth style," or what one occasionally hears talked of, "the incomparable art of Bayreuth." A happy chance led me to the second Cycle, by which I was enabled to see and form an opinion of some pupils from Frau Wagner's school, that is directed by her right-hand man, Herr Kniese. It is a delightful idea to take young people with good voices, who have as yet never appeared on any stage, and to train them by months, or perhaps even years of study, for great undertakings. It is well known that Richard Wagner himself had imagined the plan of founding a school, but unfortunately had not been able to carry it out. In 1876 he had trained the young singer Unger for the part of Siegfried. It is said the results did not come up to the expectations. Unger had not a remarkably good voice, and possessed little talent. Wagner had let himself be carried away by a pleasing appearance. If even he could not completely realize his intentions with a singer who was not naturally gifted, how much less likely was it that others would succeed? In the first place, the artist who is being formed must always have undoubted talent, at best be a genius, but in all cases he must possess a marked artistic individuality. Such a one will, even if he receives only insufficient instruction, make the part he has to play his own. At first he will possibly appear stiff and unnatural in it, and will commit the greatest blunders. Success and failure, but above all the repetition of the task itself, will incite him to repeated reflections over and remodelling of the part, and thus the artistic production will grow in perfection. If at this juncture such a pupil comes across a teacher who will impart to the student with full consciousness of his rich stores, and will put the still hesitating learner on the right

path, then we witness renderings of parts that are mile-stones on the road of art, such as the Siegmund of Niemann, the Hans Sachs of Betz, and Scaria's Gurnemanz. A striking personality, placed in the right way among the right surroundings, appears all the more imposing, as a gleaming jewel shines all the more for a beautiful setting. In Bayreuth, where such a teacher and stage manager as Wagner is no longer to be found, the necessity for marked artistic talent becomes twofold.

The singers who have come from the School of Singing gave proofs of most industrious study, but none of them offered finished artistic renderings of their parts. Breuer as Mime was the best. If in many passages (particularly at the end of the first act, where Mime, in fantastic madness that borders on insanity, already imagines himself King of the Dwarfs and ruler over everything) he was wanting in greatness—one might almost say in malicious greatness—yet his rendering of the part was most characteristic, and, for a beginner, simply astonishing. Friedrichs, the unsurpassable Beckmesser, who represented Alberich, was a remarkable artist before he came to Bayreuth. He cannot therefore be called a pupil of the School. He will only let himself be numbered among them, in so far as it pleased him to adopt, in consequence of false counsels, a style of pronouncing his words that often hampered his singing. As I shall not have to refer again to this peculiarity, I will not dwell on it longer. Friedrichs' Alberich was extraordinarily good as a piece of acting, and there was that about it which deserves to be noticed before all—it was an harmonious performance. It was a human being, perfect in all details, that stood before us. Frau Wagner's spirit of willing sacrifice is not the least factor in the actor's recovery from the severe illness that kept him so long from the stage. His return is therefore all the more welcome. Burgstaller as Siegfried gave a rendering of the part of which one was forced to say, in the first place, "All honour to such training!" A singer who, on his first appearance on the stage, undertakes the gigantic task of acting Siegfried, and of whom one notices that he remains for the most part fully conscious of the directions that have been

given him, can lay claim to no small share of admiration. Whether all the directions given were good, is certainly another question. Burgstaller has a magnificent appearance. The head is not beautiful, but on the stage it is expressive. The too great thinness of the very symmetrically built body was not unsuited to the part of the young hero, but everything you could think of was attempted to show off this pleasing appearance as much as possible. Each moment when he was not singing, and was of necessity standing still, with one movement he placed himself about three-quarter profile to the audience, his legs and the upper part of his body held rigidly together, and the head thrown backwards, rather on one side. This typical attitude was so often repeated, that any one who knew the work thoroughly could not help knowing beforehand when it was going to come again. Now and then he turned his back to the public, still in the same attitude, for the public was to have the advantage of seeing him from that point of view also. Whilst Mime tells him the story of his mother, he stood quite in profile to the auditorium, one leg placed in advance of the other, his body leaning rather forward, and his hands, with the fingers somewhat bent, stretched out towards Mime. The intention was evident. He was supposed to be drinking in the words as they fell from Mime's lips, holding his breath with excitement; but the rigidness of the attitude was unnatural and artificial. The photographer only was wanting. How was it that the stage manager allowed him to come forward at the words * "Heiss ward wir von der harten Last" (end of second act) with simply clownish movements, that were repeated on every quarter of the beat (the augmented third)? Such a hero as Siegfried would never stand as Burgstaller had to stand, with his knees doubling up under him, even if he were tired out by hard work. This, and other unessential points of the same kind, that had most obviously been taught him, impressed one disagreeably during almost the whole performance; † but still there was something very attractive

* "I am heated from the heavy load."

† Another of these unessential points was the childish frog-like hopping of Mime, before and at the words "Willkommen Siegfried" as he tries to force the drink upon him.

about this Siegfried. He had a good voice, somewhat baritone in quality, and, what was best of all, he seemed to be possessed of reserve power. Both in his acting as in his singing he just simply went straight ahead and paid no attention to light and shade. When he threw away the useless reed he did it as if it were a great stone that he had to hurl from him. When he came on with the half-jesting words * "Ein Albe führte mich irr" (first scene third act "Götterdämmerung") he sang with as much power as if it were again a question of his killing Fafner. The continual forcing of the voice to its utmost limit took its revenge by the failure of tone, often in the most important passages. In the middle of the full exercise of his powers he would suddenly remember some order that had been given him and he would carry it out, and the result was mostly something unnatural in attitude or gesture. In a finished artist these would be considered serious faults, but in a novice one does not judge them so severely. It was because he often did not argue, that one felt it was the spirit of obedience which made him comply with the directions given him, and that gave one the impression he had strong artistic instincts of his own, that would presently develop through an independent and free study of the imposed task. Sometimes in the middle of carrying out these directions, and almost unconsciously, he would find himself in opposition to them, and then he would try and show himself an obedient pupil to those who had trained him, by keeping his own inclinations in the background. There was one more hopeful promise left us by Burgstaller's artistic rendering of Siegfried, that the future would bring forth more Siegfrieds, and not only Turridus and Bajazzos.

That Burgstaller and the other pupils were occasionally uncertain in their singing, and thereby were often at variance with the orchestra, more particularly in "Siegfried," can be forgiven, on the plea that they were novices who were acting. At the same time it might well be asked, if it is to see a student performance that we go to Bayreuth? But what is quite unpardonable is the way the scene of the Valkyries was

* "A dwarf led me astray."

sung. Whole passages were left out, and the prompting voice of the conductor was plainly audible. In an ordinary theatre such a thing would have been energetically resented ; in Bayreuth it all seemed to many people "exquisite."

If Burgstaller's Siegfried, and some other renderings, called attention to much that was cheering, yet they also confirmed an observation that has often been made and painfully felt, *i.e.*, the utter deterioration of the art of singing in Germany. Correct voice-production, the right blending and shading of tones, and well-thought-out musical phrasing are seldom to be found in any of the young rising artists. In Bayreuth everything is sacrificed to pronunciation. This is carried to such an extent that the singers sometimes no longer sing but speak, which can only be justified in exceptional cases. (What Wagner wrote in "Schauspieler und Sänger" of the Fidelio of Frau Schröder-Devrient should be read by all.) Already the Bayreuth School of Singing has won for itself the nickname of "Consonant School"—and not without reason. The consonants are hurled forth with a hissing sound that lacerates the words, not only to the detriment of the vowel when it falls on a sustained note, but also to the injury of the tone. The vowels are, moreover, often mispronounced, as, for instance, *e* as *i*, *a* as the French *a* in "an," &c. Is Wagner's work as an artist not also fundamentally connected with the art of singing? "Singing Wagner ruins the voice," and "Wagnerian artists can no longer sing Mozart," are cant phrases that one is forced to listen to *ad nauseam*. Let those who say such things hear Vogl sing Octavio and Tamino. The young people ought to *learn to sing*, as their elders have done before them, and ought not to appear on the stage till they can ; then they also will understand how to sing Mozart, and no Wagner rôle will ruin their voices. From time immemorial a thorough education in the *technique* of voice-production has been the indispensable condition of an artistic performance, and *in this* Wagner has changed nothing. How often did he implore the artists, if they wanted to carry out his work after his intentions, to sing every single note as he had written it. Certainly a distinct pronunciation and a clear-cut method of speaking are absolutely required. no less of a singer than of

an actor. But cannot the arts of speaking and singing be united, so as to help each other? For instance, Friedrich certainly endowed Alberich with the qualities of "haste, greed, hatred, and anger," as Wagner required, and which he praised in Hill's rendering of the part. But Hill was a singer of the first rank and never neglected to sing musically, even when the intensest expression was required of him. The same may be said of the distinguished Schleper, of Leipzig, but, alas, not of Friedrich! In the second act of "Siegfried" the scene between Alberich and Mimeno longer belonged to musical drama, but to melodramatic farce, played with orchestral accompaniment by two half-speaking, half-shrieking dwarfs. What Wagner says in his "Retrospect of the Festival of 1876," about the way the gigantic task should be carried out that is given to Wotan in the second act of the "Walküre," ought to be read by all. Wagner, writing of Franz Betz, says: "For the rendering of the part, for the management of the voice, of the tone, and by means of speech itself, nothing short of everything had to be thought out afresh, and to be repeated till he had made it his own. A year's earnest preparation was necessary to make my singer, master of a style that he had to discover for himself as he puzzled out his task." But will a singer be capable of discovering a new style for a fresh part, if he is not already perfectly master of his voice in all its registers, and thus understands the language of speech in the spirit of music, and the music that is in the spirit of speech? He will be able to do this just as little, as a workman will be in the position to offer something in his trade, who does not even know how to handle his tools. And moreover, have we not this year, during the last Festival, been witness of this combination in the highest perfection? I name the names of *Rosa Sucher* and *Heinrich Vogl*. Their Sieglinde and Loge were renderings that towered above all the rest. They re-created Wagner's work of art for us and raised us again to the heights of inspiration that we had reached in Bayreuth, when Wagner's intentions were revealed to us through himself and the artists he had chosen.

As to what they really think in Wahnfried nowadays of those great times, I first learnt, to my own satisfaction, from

the accounts of the second Cycle written by Mr. Houston Stewart Chamberlain, the editor of the new "Biography of Wagner." After invectives hurled at Frau Lilli Lehmann, whom he reproaches for her method and the compass of her voice, and calls them tricky, we read, word for word, that "the 'Nibelungen' of 1876 and 'Parsifal' of 1882 were carried out with the support of artists who were more or less spoilt for Wagner's intentions." That agrees perfectly with the already-mentioned, unfavourable comments on those artists that I had heard ten years before at Wahnfried. What are Frau Wagner and the spreaders abroad of her opinions and wishes aiming at? Is the memory of the Festivals that were held during her husband's lifetime to be disparaged, so as to make what his wife has since accomplished appear all the more brilliant? And if anything so monstrous had been really intended, are there no men there, who dare to speak a bold word and to check this boundless offence to all justice? If Richard Wagner had lived to see the Festival of 1896, how he would have longed for his Niemann, his Betz, his Hill, his Materna, those fundamentally strong, healthy personalities! How it would have pleased him to hear his Loge, after twenty years, as fresh and as young as ever! The hurry with which he then had to carry out his great work may have been the cause why he did not then smooth over many shortcomings, and left much that was still imperfect; but to take only one of the artists mentioned, what would the appearance to-day of a Niemann mean for the Festivals! What an impression the first act of the "Walküre" made upon us whilst he was still in active work! And are such artists to be considered "spoilt" for the intentions of the "Master"? And Mr. Chamberlain dares to state that openly? If he wanted, in his long-winded, rosy-tinted report, to excuse the imperfections that he himself had to acknowledge in the performances, by the presence of an incomparable *ensemble*, then I must state that, according to my ideas, that is the direct opposite of the truth, for it was exactly this general impression that was wanting at Bayreuth. *If it had existed, then the details which had failed would have been less painfully apparent, and perhaps hardly worth mentioning.* But Chamberlain may have been

convinced that it was there, and no one can dispute his right to say so. Such a statement must, however, be absolutely denied if it is made with the intention of putting that which is now offered at Bayreuth in a more favourable light, and if it injures those artists, whose artistic work is for all time inseparably bound up with Wagner's and ought to serve as models for coming generations. History shows us many examples of similar laughable time-serving. Posterity will, however, one day have the just criticism of Bayreuth written for it, and will then value it at its true worth.

There is yet one word to be said of Frau Gulbranson, the fourth pupil of the Bayreuth School of Singing. She sang much better than the other two. Her voice is fine and full of feeling, and her acting and appearance were child-like and maidenly in character, and, as was often and truly remarked, there was nothing of the prima donna about her; on the other hand, she was lacking in grandeur and dramatic power. Her awakening in "Siegfried" was insignificant, and her acting in the second and third acts of "Götterdämmerung" was obviously studied, more particularly in the scene where, with her hand on the point of the spear, she calls down death on Siegfried's head. Here her strength failed her completely. It is impossible to say how far Frau Gulbranson's natural gifts and how far the Bayreuth School are answerable for this, and it is equally impossible to surmise how she would act and sing away from Bayreuth, when less under the influence of that place. But it will always be a preposterous and absurd idea to attempt to replace talent and individuality by school training. Wagner once said, "*We must quicken our power of discerning genius, so as to recognize it at once whenever it appears.*" How far is Bayreuth nowadays from following this advice? Those who have seen Frau Materna, Frau Sucher, and Frau Reicher-Kinderman, can have some idea of what Wagner imagined Brünnhilde to be. The Mannheim Court Theatre once possessed a Brünnhilde in Cäcilie Mohor, who was unfortunately lost to the stage far too early through her marriage, and she far surpassed Frau Gulbranson. In comparison to the others it was difficult to follow what she sang, even if tolerably familiar with the poem. She is a Swede,

and is still at daggers drawn with the German language. She is less to be blamed for this, than it is to be wondered at, that more, among the relatively few Germans present, seemed to have even noticed it. Nowhere have I heard this remarkable shortcoming even mentioned, much less blamed.

This want of perception of so weighty a question gives me a starting point for some reflections on the administration of the Festivals, as well as on the German public. It was certainly quite right, to use every available means to make it possible for the Bayreuth Festivals to continue, and to carry out Wagner's idea of a school of singing. Certainly the courage, the active force, and also the wisdom, with which Frau Cosima Wagner has placed herself at the head of the artistic and practical administration of the Festivals, deserves admiration and appreciation. But when judging by the results, it must in the first place be asked, how the personality is constituted which will venture to take up, and carry on, such powerful and world-stirring ideas as Wagner's. Devotion and determination are not of themselves sufficient to carry them through to completion. Wagner was a *German* master, with Weber the most German that has ever lived. Beethoven's music, though having its roots in German soil, embraces the whole world, and in its incomprehensible, immeasurable greatness, an idea that takes in all humanity has found its expression. He was therefore not essentially a dramatist, but lived and created chiefly in the sphere of absolute music. To Wagner, on the other hand, can be applied the words that he cried over Weber's grave: "See, now the Briton does justice to you, the Frenchman admires you, but the German alone can love you!" The innermost soul of his work was German; it was planned for Germans, and by Germans it should be carried out. The wife and successor of the Master, the present head of the Festivals, is Magyar on her father's side, on her mother's French, and she is therefore anything but German. It is also a very moot point, whether a human being who is the outcome of such a heterogeneous combination of nationalities can ever quite grasp in their fulness the intrinsically German fundamental thoughts of the Wagnerian works of art. Further, it may be questioned if a woman can ever be

capable of bringing these fundamental thoughts into living expression and to produce them out of herself. I purposely say "produce," for a perfect rendering of the Wagnerian works of art is far more than the so-called reproduction, in the arts of acting, singing, conducting, and stage management. It demands a realization in its entirety of the picture that is to be created, a realization that must have something of the quality of genius in it, in addition to the minutest technical knowledge of all the departments connected with it, and the capability of so imparting in detail to others, that which has been visualized in the most intimate and intense manner, that, as in a perfect organism each limb fits in with the other, and none does too much or too little, so out of the divided parts, the whole undivided picture is re-created. This active power is absolutely new, and was non-existent till then, as it only became for the first time really necessary for Wagner's works of art, and it therefore implies an absolutely new capacity that had never before been known. Such a capacity must have an essentially productive character, not equivalent to poetry and composition, but necessarily completing it, and so, in some degree, forming the third power of a firm union. The artist, in Wagner's sense of the word, must be able himself to put his work into verse and to music, and to produce it. This includes putting these works on the stage and eventually conducting them. He must also thoroughly understand the art of designing scenery and dress; in fact, be capable of an active, comprehensive superintendence over the whole. It is only a combination of these three capacities that makes it possible really to *create* the work of art, so that it lives in the performance and does not only exist on paper. The last of these three capacities (I should like to call it the capacity for getting works of art represented) includes foreign works of all kinds, as well as the original works of the man who undertakes to get them represented. These former, called into life with the same love and intenseness as the latter, will appear in a till then undreamt-of freshness and impressiveness. Wagner's conducting of the Beethoven Symphonies illustrated this, for no one could call that mere reproduction. Dramatic works after his idea, with the exception of his own,

did not exist, and consequently he only showed his power of representing works of art, with regard to the stage, in the latter. Till then, he alone was master of this universal art of representing works of art, and only a *creative* artist will again be able to call it his own. Such a one alone will possess the necessary capacity for improvisation in the highest sense of the word, as is demanded by Wagner, and thus stamp on his productions the character of eternal youth and spontaneous fresh feeling. No one will however succeed in this who is a one-sided stage-manager, conductor, actor, or singer. A woman least of all will possess this quality, for women can never produce works of genius. A pretty lyric poem, a passable picture, is the highest they can attain, and that only in rare cases. Their artistic activity is otherwise exclusively limited to reproduction, namely, attaining an often high degree of excellence, in the arts of singing, acting, or instrumental music. More than that they *cannot* and *ought not* to attempt. They are naturally receptive, and are able to give out again that which they have received, but they are not creative—and only such a one will possess the productive character necessary to bring the artistic work to perfect fulfilment after Wagner's wishes. It must be a *man*!

In intellect and knowledge, Frau Wagner stands so far above the average of her sex, that in spite of all, she could be very useful to the Festivals, and a lovable adviser, if only she would restrict her activity and had men at her side who would oppose her mistakes with the uncompromising courage of conviction, and whose better judgment she also would follow. Her exclusive authority is a misfortune, for the superficial and the sycophant (mankind can be mainly divided into these two species) receive everything that she offers as pure gold, without really judging it, because they think it comes from the one chosen successor of Wagner. But her un-German, as well as her woman's nature, deny to Frau Wagner the capability of truly taking possession of this inheritance, and show her much-admired activity to be only the product of routine, gained through long years of practice, and not the outcome of a real gift of genius. If instead of a non-German woman, a German man stood at the head of affairs,

even if he were not a genius, we should certainly not have suffered the predilection for foreign singers, the insensibility to bad German pronunciation, and the taste for what was eccentric in costumes, and the weakening of the work of art through the unnatural dragging of the time. We should also not have been treated to the sight of artists, by nature weak and passive, called to fill muscular parts ; for example, asking Perron to play Wotan. Far be it from me to say anything against this distinguished singer, whom I have often had occasion to admire sincerely. But he was not suited for Wotan, he was far too lyric and sentimental. The fault lay with the management that offered him the part. Perhaps the otherwise excellent Grengg, who again was quite unfitted for the *rôle* of Hagen, would have made a better Wotan, because of his weighty voice and impressive appearance. Now the reason why the "Meistersinger," which is the most German of all Wagner's plays, should have been so specially successful when produced in 1888, was ascribed, by the people who took part in it, to the manly behaviour of Richter, and the circumstance that Frau Wagner in that year had given the whole of her attention to "Parsifal."

The conviction, that a man should be at the head of affairs at Bayreuth, seems to have dawned upon Frau Wagner. At the same time, it must have troubled her to know, who could take over the direction of the Festivals when she herself was no longer alive. But fate played into her hands most kindly ! There was a son, who was undoubtedly the lineal inheritor of the Master ; why should he not be made the intellectual inheritor as well ? Certainly there was one circumstance that seemed of importance. Young Mr. Wagner had been declared to be unmusical, and consequently had not received a musical training. Ten years ago, and even later, neither his mother nor he made any secret of this. But that, after all, did not matter. Since people with individual talent are not popular at Bayreuth, are even qualified as "spoilt" for the object of the management of the Festival, they lost no time, but coached the to all appearance unmusical Siegfried, till they made him into something resembling a musician. Now Frau Wagner, with her wonderful knowledge of the human heart,

knew beforehand quite well, that at the right moment enough people would be found who would be only too glad to spread abroad the advent of the new genius. And so the experiment was ventured upon, and in an incredibly short space of time the pupil of the Technical High School developed, not, if you please, into a musical student, but a master of the art of conducting. With a few pieces, in which he had been carefully coached, and which he gave with some very startling *nuances*, he visited several of the larger European towns during three years. There his father's name, and his mother's wide-spread relations, caused all doors to fly open before him, and enthusiastic reports and interviews were sown broadcast. Suddenly there burst upon the world Herr Siegfried Wagner's letter in *Die Redenden Künste*, in which it appears that he considers himself to have mastered the art of conducting, and imagines he is now above such a "secondary" occupation. He is of opinion that good conductors are always to be had, as if there were no need for him to trouble himself any further about the question. Although it is not to be denied that this would undoubtedly be a great gain, yet the unexampled coolness of this piece of literature remains as worthy of admiration as the calm with which the other conductors received it. Hans Richter, as "the oldest friend of the family," in the *Times* declared Siegfried Wagner to be "remarkable as conductor and stage manager." Whether in this declaration one sees the expression of conviction, or an act of friendship, in either case something unexplained lurks in the background. Richter is only a Kapellmeister, and as such naturally competent to conduct, but he understands—at least according to Siegfried Wagner's own statement—nothing about the stage. How has he been able to find out that Siegfried Wagner is a remarkable stage manager? At all events an uncommonly ludicrous impression was made by this letter in *Die Redenden Künste*, and it received a really painful character from the incense that Frau Wagner offered up to her faithful followers in the letter addressed to the committee of the Berlin Wagner Society. But still it would always be desirable, in respect to the orders that conductors in Bayreuth have to obey, if it were satisfactorily settled

wherein the difference lies—whether the orders are derived from Richard Wagner's times or whether they now come from Cosima or even Siegfried.

It is not only Frau Wagner, but also the German public that is to blame that Bayreuth is not all it might be. If the public had supported Richard Wagner instead of attacking him, then he would have reached his goal while still young, and the Festivals would have been longer under his direction. If, after the death of the Master, the public had seen in Bayreuth an object of pride and the crowning point of its national art, then Bayreuth would not have fallen into the hands of the foreigners. Think what would happen in the Grand Opera in Paris, if a performance were given by singers who distorted the French language! The performance would not be allowed to continue. In Germany a representation of "Lohengrin" passed muster in which most of the chief performers spoke German scandalously. It was not only quietly accepted, but it was said that the co-operation of the foreigners had given it "an additional interest." How often has it been regretted, and it cannot be sufficiently regretted, that the Germans are wanting in that, of which other nations have too much—national pride! If Wagner had lived longer, after he had at last been recognized by the whole world when he was nearly seventy, the national conscience would perhaps have been strengthened by Bayreuth, and if his wife had had to do with a public endowed with an enlightened conscience, she would have had to leave many experiments untried. And thus Wagner's child of sorrow, his German Festival Theatre, has become a model theatre for the Americans, the English, and the French. If the foreigners had come to us, and had taken part in the victory of Bayreuth, it would have been an honour for us. That the Festivals have been thrust upon them is a national disgrace.

If the representations of this year, as in former years, were wanting in the great characteristic of uniformity, and the performances succeeded each other, now successful and now unsuccessful, yet there was something about the 1896 Festivals that distinguished it favourably from those that had gone before since 1888. Was it perhaps that warning voices,

which were ostentatiously ignored, had all the same penetrated into the sanctuary of Wahnfried? The report that de Reszké was to sing Siegfried, and Lassalle Wotan did not come true. With the exception of Frau Gulbranson, more German singers were now to be heard in the principal parts, and—as has already been noticed—the “Bayreuth *Tempo*” had disappeared, and Wagner’s directions as to time were carried out, and every effort was made to do the same with his other injunctions. This gave the representations a more honest character than those of the previous years, and it was that which distinguished them more than anything else. May they only continue in the same spirit! The Festivals will then win the sympathy of those, who certainly believe as little in the infallibility of Frau Wagner, as in that of the Pope, but who, on the other hand, have kept the ideal of the Wagnerian art work pure and unsullied in their hearts. There are certainly few such as these, but it is well known that there are everywhere only a minority who are finally proved to be in the right, and whose efforts are crowned with success; not the great unself-reliant public, who repeat what is said for them like parrots. Bayreuth will also always have three great advantages over other theatres: the wonderful characteristic building with its half-covered-in orchestra, the possibility of selecting the best available musical and dramatic talent, and finally, the independence from preconceived plans of operation, where all kinds of different operas are produced. Probably the successful will alternate with the unsuccessful in the future. May the successful be always in the ascendant! But only one being will be able to give to the Festivals the qualities of simple greatness, unity, and the impetus of true inspiration, and that is a powerful, independent, and universal *genius*! We may hope that he will appear, and that in due time and in the right place, but we must not make it a reproach to any one that he is not there already. Therefore let us hope!

But there is something more to be done than hope inactively. If we ask of Bayreuth that it should behave honourably to us, then we must be equally honourable in our dealings with it. More than once when speaking out my mind, to friends and supporters of the Festivals, concerning the failings of

Bayreuth since the Master's death, I met with the most perfect agreement with what I said, but followed at once by the almost terrified request, before everything not to express my views openly, as one ought not to do an injury to the name and memory of Wagner, or shake the confidence of the public in the representations, or reveal their imperfections. Sooner remain silent than endanger the Festivals! One of the best known Bayreuthians to whom I had sent my pamphlet "Ueber das Dirigiren," wrote to me with the petition not to mention his name, and saying, among other things, "Must it come to this. Unfortunately, I have already feared it too long, that the sins of New Bayreuth should come to the surface, and be mercilessly shown up. . . . But for all that, it is most painful, that after a dozen years, one who had been chosen out should have to take such a step. . . . In spite of all, we must still revere Bayreuth." An extremely clever Austrian writer expresses the spirit of this last sentence even more clearly, in a criticism of the above-mentioned pamphlet. "If such a man as Weingartner finds cause in our day for censure, one of those . . . he does not work for the well-intentioned, but for those who are opponents on principle . . . Here, we who are capable of admiring, ought before all things to admire. *To experience this does the world more good than criticism.*" Ought Bayreuth really to lay claim to be alone the *omnia admirari*?

I now turn my attention, not, if you please, to the hysterical sycophants in Frau Wagner's following, but to the serious men who are devoted to the work of Wagner's life. I number among these latter the two whose words I have quoted. Do people really believe that they are honouring the memory of the Master and are forwarding his affairs, when they either admire or try to hide the faults of the present Festivals? Do they not see that it is *exactly by this* that they are driving Bayreuth to its certain downfall? Do not be anxious if things at Bayreuth no longer look as they did in the years 1876 and 1882. That has nothing to do with Wagner's ideas. Great mountains throw their shadows far into the plain, and great events can bring sad results in their train. Only think what a caricature was in a short time made of the teaching of

Jesus of Nazareth ; when the head failed the limbs fell asunder. It is therefore certainly not to be wondered at, that when the Master's strong will was no longer there to exercise its controlling power, an uncertain trying and testing should take the place of clear decision. We will undoubtedly prize Bayreuth highly, and use all our love and strength to assure the continuation of the Festivals. But we will not countenance its mistakes by a false admiration, and a cowardly silence, for in so doing we become ourselves enemies and desecrators of the sanctuary. Where a spot shows itself on the face of our sun, then speak out boldly and let all concerned fall to work, so that it be wiped out and the bright light be once more visible ! It is only by so doing that we shall be *real* friends of Bayreuth. Of course, now and then thunderstorms will arise, but do not think that they are harmful. Storms clear the air, and Wagner's great thoughts are powerful enough to weather victoriously even more terrific tempests than those that have already raged around them.



Cornell University Library
ML 410.W2W42

Bayreuth (1876-1896) /



3 1924 017 552 393

mus

